Stepping out of the plane in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, Canada, I could see the haze and detect the acrid smell from forest fires that had engulfed large patches of Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) this July. Our mission to capture 10 Whooping Crane chicks was on the verge of a costly delay due to poor visibility that was hampering reconnaissance flights. Fortunately, the news from Mark Bidwell of the Canadian Wildlife Service and Felipe Chavez-Ramirez of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory the following day was good. Their efforts had documented many Whooping Crane family groups that would be suitable for a visit from our team of crane catchers, which also included Dave Brandt of the U.S. Geological Survey. Continued on page 2

Whooping Crane 2012-24 walks slowly away into a crane marsh in Wood Buffalo National Park after being released at water’s edge. The chick had just been banded and health checked as part of a multi-year study in late July. Photos by Mark Bidwell

Dr. George Archibald wins Audubon’s Lufkin Award, See page 6
When I think about the conservation challenges we face in the coming century, my thoughts invariably turn to food, water, and energy. How will we feed 9 billion people and still maintain healthy landscapes for cranes and other life we hold dear? How will we value cities and farmlands without sacrificing life-supporting rivers and wetlands? Can we meet the global demand for electricity without devastating our land, water, air—and climate?

We write and speak often about the role of cranes as flagships for sustainable water management, and the unique challenges of crane conservation in agricultural landscapes. The connections between cranes and energy—including its distribution, production, and exploration—are equally strong, but perhaps not as well known.

In recent years, overhead power distribution lines have emerged as a serious threat to cranes and many other species worldwide. Cranes are vulnerable to power line collisions when flying in and out of wetland roosting sites before and after dusk (when the lines are hard to see, even with markers), and on staging grounds where cranes are less familiar with the landscape. Juvenile birds new to flight are especially prone to collisions. Where cranes congregate in huge numbers, such as on the Platte River in spring, these collisions can take a heavy toll.

We are working with partners across the globe to reduce the number of power line collisions along crane flyways. A new ICF collaboration with the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center and the Crane Trust aims to reduce power line collisions and other human-caused mortality threats. Efforts by Urban Wildlife Institute, Julie Langenberg, Madison, WI (Wildlife in the Urban Landscape), Marie Baerens, Sask City, WI (Vice President Finance and Administration)

When work in WPBN has likely finished for the time being, the crane crew has one big, last task to perform—20 adults on Matagorda Island at Aransas NWR in Texas this winter and next. Instead of helicopters, smoke and terrible terrain, we may end up dealing with old trucks, busy roads and snakes!

**Notes from the President**

Cranes and Sustainable Energy

**By Rich Beilfuss**

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The boreal forest gives way to the crane marshes (right) of Wood Buffalo National Park near Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, Canada.

For the past three summers, ICF has provided professional veterinary support to the Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership (not to be confused with the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership) during captures and satellite tagging of pre-fledged chicks at WCP’s Wildlife Services Department. This is ideally positioned to play this important role in helping ensure the safety and welfare of the crane, as well as adding significant scientific value to the project in the form of a first-time health assessment of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population funded by the University of Wisconsin Companion Animal Fund.

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I am 60 years old and I have been hunting almost for 40 years and thousands of birds including white cranes were hunted by myself and my sons. I was never aware of the decline and vulnerability of the birds before and I thought that our hunting would never decrease the number of birds, but now I understand that Siberian Cranes have disappeared and I am very upset accordingly. I will never hunt the cranes anymore and I will prevent my relatives as well.

– Amir Mohammed, Tribal elder and hunter from Kapisa Province, Afghanistan

Illegal hunting is the primary cause of the decline of the Critically Endangered Siberian Crane in Western and Central Asia. Through the support of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, ICF promoted widespread public education to hunters in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Russia to improve understanding of the Siberian Crane and its habitats. Relationships were fostered with hunters who are inspired to make choices to help protect this species and its ecosystems, and to correctly identify the species, choose to avoid hunting cranes, and report sightings.

Each country undertook diverse and creative approaches to develop relationships and shared understanding with the hunting community. They gave presentations and held open discussions with hunters, border guards, and officials. They produced films and distributed posters and brochures to help hunters correctly identify the Siberian Crane. They also placed display boards on well-travelled roads near key wetlands.

Working closely with our Afghan colleagues, our team encountered serious challenges, but were finally permitted to visit with hunters in important, high security border zones. With the help of our local elders they established Hunter Committees to address crane conservation issues. They met with the District Governor and Chief of the Frontier Police to discuss their plans and part of the government program focused on the critical issue of maintaining a healthy eutrophy ecosystem through water management and conservation in the Coastal Bend of south Texas. We plan to launch the program and conduct our first teacher training in the summer of 2013.

Eventually we hope to reach every community in the vicinity of wild Whooping Cranes, inspiring our nation’s youth to care about the future of cranes.

By Erica Cochrane and Joan Garland, ICF Communications and Education Department

For 40 years, ICF and partners have worked to help Whooping Cranes recover from the brink of extinction. The people who share the land with these amazing birds will ultimately determine if they can recover and thrive to be part of our natural living heritage. Through a new education program, ICF hopes to engage thousands of teachers and inspire millions of students and their families to care about Whooping Cranes. ICF and Humble University’s Center for Global Environmental Education have formed a partnership to develop a National Whooping Crane Environmental Education Program. The program will educate 4th-8th grade students, their parents and their teachers in how individuals and communities can help Whooping Cranes recover and thrive. Through the use of interactive multimedia and games, students will value having cranes as part of their future, they will understand the challenges of equitable water management and land stewardship, and they will engage in water conservation, wetland management, and responsible hunting practices.

In 1978, George Archibald (left) met a weary Ron Saury at the airport. Ron had just arrived from Moscow with five precious Siberian Crane eggs in tow, and a chick that hatched in the suitcase en route! George and Ron’s innovative ideas and leadership in the early days helped ICF establish a unique “species bank” that is now vital for the re-introduction of endangered cranes. Continuity of excellent leadership has been central to ICF’s successes for people, cranes, and their ecosystems over the decades.

Grants to support the development of the Crane Environmental Education program and the protection of cranes and their ecosystems have matured into a global organization dedicated to saving this most endangered family of birds and the ecosystems on which cranes (and all of us) depend.

From the beginning, ICF’s headquarters near Baraboo has been the incubator for both ideas and eggs. With five species of endangered cranes hidden behind the “Iron Curtain” of China, we spent our first decade establishing a species bank through captive breeding efforts. Conserving cranes in the wild was also a top priority back then as Co-founder Ron Saury’s early work focused on India and my efforts were concentrated in Japan and Korea. When relations between China and the U.S. improved, ICF entered a decade of exploration with Chinese colleagues to locate and encourage habitat protection. When the Iron Curtain finally fell in 1991, new possibilities opened throughout the former USSR. As opportunities became available, we joined forces with colleagues in more places important for cranes.

As laws were enacted to protect cranes and their habitats, it became obvious that the fate of wildlife depended on the values and welfare of local people who shared water and land with cranes. Many who reside near cranes in Asia and Africa live in poverty and are concerned about meeting their basic needs. Consequently, ICF helped develop model community-based projects in some of the most economically depressed areas of China, India, and Africa to improve local livelihoods while inspiring new appreciation for the endangered birds. We also grew to realize that the successful management of river basins was critical to the health of downstream wetlands, and ICF has become deeply involved in securing vital flows in major river systems around the world.

These achievements have been possible through your dedication and support, both in funding and volunteerism, to promote conservation leadership.

I think back to the early years when Baraboo attorney and passionate conservationist Forrest Hartmann met every Wednesday evening with Ron and me to pay bills and discuss crane business. Millie Zantow and Joan Fordham respectively held ICF together for forty years! I look somewhat different in the mirror these days, but I am just as enthusiastic as ever about ICF’s mission to touch the places and people where cranes still dance. What began as the dream of two students has matured into a global organization dedicated to saving this most endangered family of birds and the ecosystems on which cranes (and all of us) depend.

And gifted young people joined and remain on the staff this day. Jim Harris started as the head of education in 1986 and today lives in China where he directs our programs in East Asia. Claire Miranda started as our Curator of Birds in 1984 and today with Jim spearheads the World Working Group of Cranes. Since 1987, Jeb Barzen has led the Field Ecology Department and today oversees a fleet of researchers who study wild cranes and their habitats from Wisconsin to Cambodia. And our President and CEO, Rich Beilfuss, started at ICF as a graduate student and intern in 1988, before launching our programs in Africa in the 1990s. As we celebrate our 40th anniversary and forthcoming issues of The ICF Buggle will highlight conservation leaders at home and abroad, many of whom were supported by ICF to pursue graduate programs at leading universities with thesis projects on cranes. Two of these leaders, Tran Tiet and Barry Hartup, are featured in this issue.

Continuity of excellent leadership has been central to ICF’s successes for people, cranes, and their ecosystems over the decades. Through our 2012/13 annual campaign, Forty Years of Conservation Leadership, we continue advancing our global programs through special emphasis on mentoring and advising scores of young learners – through curricula for school children, volunteer opportunities, paid internships, field training, and graduate programs – to develop the on-the-ground leadership that makes our work and effective conservation possible.

Joan Fordham

by Claire Miranda and Elena Knyazeva

Hunters and Conservationists Join Forces to Protect Cranes in Central Asia
In 2002, ICF initiated the establishment of a university network in Southeast Asia that focused on wetland research and training. From 8 university members at the beginning, the University Network has now expanded to 18 members from 7 countries, including all 6 Mekong countries and Malaysia. From July 18 to August 6 of this year, the University Network implemented its 10th regional training course on wetland ecology and management. Nineteen students, from 16 universities in China, Southeast Asia and Louisiana State University in the U.S., attended the training, which was taught by nine lecturers from Malaysia, Thailand, USA and Vietnam. An Giang University hosted the training course at its new campus in Long Xuyen City, Vietnam. Half of the training time, occurred in the field where students and instructors practiced basic topics of wetland ecology in different wetland ecosystems of the Mekong Delta (river, lakes, mangroves, floodplain swamp forests and marshes). During field practice, course participants, with direct instruction from Dr. Donald Cahoon from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, also installed 3 SET (Surface Elevation Table) benchmarks at Tram Chim National Park. These benchmarks serve in the monitoring network of coastal surface elevation developed by USGS and assist scientific research on the impacts of global climate change. The training course this year received financial support from the U.S. Department of State, USGS, International Crane Foundation and An Giang University. After the 10th training course, the University Network has trained more than 220 young lecturers and wetland researchers on the impacts of global climate change. The University Network has also developed and coordinated regional research projects that were jointly implemented by member universities. The most recent example is a study of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) on wetlands of the Mekong River Basin. Eight universities from five Mekong countries participated in the study, which was led by ICF. The study also involved the USGS National Wetland Research Center, the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and Louisiana State University. The study is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of State under the Mekong Initiative established by Secretary Hilary Clinton. Within four months, more than 50 researchers from participating universities collected 531 sediment samples from about 450 wetlands located throughout the Mekong Basin from Myanmar to Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. This project is the first comprehensive study on POPs ever done for the Mekong River Basin and one of a few such large-scale studies worldwide. Results of the study showed that high concentrations of POPs were present in wetlands that are important for conservation, including those that serve as breeding and wintering habitats for Sarus Cranes. The study recommends further investigation of the impacts of POPs on wildlife and humans in the Lower Mekong Basin. ICF researchers are working alongside their colleagues in the University Network to publish the results of this landmark study. Since the beginning of the University Network, ICF has been assisting with fundraising and coordinating training and research activity. With a recent grant from U.S. Department of State, ICF is helping the University Network to further develop into an independent non-profit organization capable of directly handling training, research and public relation activities.


This adventure led by ICF President and CEO, Rich Belilios, will begin in Lusaka, Zambia and conclude at Johannesburg, South Africa. We will visit South Luangwa National Park, the magnificent Kafue Flats, the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, and the lakes district of South Africa. Together with key ICF-staff and partners, we will learn about international efforts to save three species of endangered cranes, and experience the myriad birds, lions, elephant, buffalo, leopard, zebra, and hippos that share these diverse landscapes. We will keep the group small, with a maximum of 14 travelers. Call 608-356-9462 ext. 101 or email info@savingcranes.org for more details on this awesome adventure!


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Good Egg awards were presented to Tom Lynn (left) and to Charlie Luthin. Tom was recognized for outstanding contributions of time and effort photographing native plants, prairie, and panoramas at ICF, while Charlie was lauded for launching ecological restoration efforts at ICF, for major contributions to the reintroduction of Whooping Cranes and the conservation of wetlands worldwide.

ANNUAL MEMBER DAY

Thank you, members for attending our first-ever Pizza on the Prairie event! The evening was reminiscent of a family reunion as ICF staff shared stories from around the world.

Peace and Whooping Cranes Holiday Card by Janet Flynn

Adapted from an original watercolor of Whooping Cranes. This self-standing card is pretty enough to keep up year round. Package of 10 - ½ x 1½” cards and 10 - #10 recycled white envelopes - $20/pkg.

Shop online at www.craneshop.org, email Giftshop@savingcranes.org or call 608-356-9462 ext. 116.

And the Crane Flew Over the Moon

This original block print of a Sandhill Crane flying in front of a full moon was created exclusively for the International Crane Foundation by one of our staff. Silkscreened onto beautiful Galapagos Blue 100% cotton t-shirts. $19.99. Unisex sizes – S,M,L, XL, XXL.

Good Egg Awards

Our coveted behind-the-scenes tour of Crane City is always a big hit!

Despite hundreds of visitors being on our site - there’s always a peaceful vista to enjoy!

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The Black-necked Crane inhabits high elevations of the Tibetan-Qinghai Plateau, descending to slightly lower altitudes in winter. These high places have experienced some of the earth’s most dramatic changes in climate. The warmer conditions of recent years might make life – and survival – easier for this threatened species and thus partly account for the dramatic growth in this crane’s population since the early 1990s. As we try to understand how climate change may affect the cranes, however, we must consider more than simply average monthly or annual temperatures.

At the first meeting of the Black-necked Crane Network, held in Yunnan, China in August, we discussed impacts of more variable weather, in particular the greater extremes of hot and cold for this region. Dr. Kong Dejun of the Kunming Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences has documented crane mortality during abnormally cold winter periods at Dashanbao National Nature Reserve (NNR). Impacts of climate change are complex, and likely to change with time for any given crane species.

Dr. Li Fengshan, ICF’s China Program Coordinator, was one of the organizers of the meeting that involved 39 participants from across the range of Black-necked Cranes in China, including both wildlife managers and researchers. The network plans to meet regularly to exchange results of research and conservation, with the next meeting to occur in summer 2013 at Cao Hai NNR.

ICF, together with the Wetlands International – IUCN Species Survival Commission Crane Specialist Group, is pleased to announce the publication of the proceedings of the 2010 workshop held at Muraviovka Park in far eastern Russia. Edited by Jim Harris, ICF Senior Vice President and Chair of the Crane Specialist Group, Cranes, Agriculture, and Climate Change includes 20 papers. This publication will be available for download by December 2012 from the ICF website at www.savingcranes.org/digital-books.html.

Photo taken by Wang Keju following a winter storm that deposited ice across the entire landscape – including over the backs of these Black-necked Cranes at Dashanbao National Nature Reserve.